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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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This document reflects the work of every individual who attended the meetings or wrote comments. It was apparent from the beginning that Aztalan is a beloved and cherished historical resource to many people. We hope that this plan will be a guide for sharing our affection for this site with others.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Aztalan is an ancient, sacred place. Its archeological treasures, Native American culture, and pristine appearance must be protected. Ironically, a critical component of the site's long term protection is educating and inspiring the public to understand its global significance. The park is currently 187 acres with an approved boundary of 265 acres. This master plan recommends an expansion of 754 acres of which 100 acres will be purchased in fee title and the remainder would be purchase of development rights for a total of 1019 acres.

Aztalan State Park will be managed as a nationally recognized archeological site that will also provide opportunities for archaeological interpretation, picnicking, hiking and other compatible recreational uses. The intent of this plan is to preserve, protect and actively interpret Aztalan's archaeological resources as well as its scenic, flowing beauty while offering compatible, recreational opportunities. Throughout the property's development, we must respect, explore and celebrate both the history and mystery of one of Wisconsin's first farming communities. We must inspire an aesthetic, and physical connection from the present to this amazing past at the edge of an ancient frontier.

### **Recent Aztalan State Park History**

From 1980 until 2000 the park was owned by the State of Wisconsin and managed by the Town of Aztalan. In 2000, management was returned to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and a full-time natural resource educator position was created. This position works out of the Glacial Drumlin State Trail office located in Lake Mills.

### **Current Uses**

The site is currently used for picnicking, hiking, shoreline fishing, canoe launching, dog walking, high school cross-country meets and historical interpretation. School groups and other tourist groups often visit to learn about and study the archaeological and historical aspects of the site. Archaeologists and historians regularly conduct group tours for visitors. Local residents and tourists are attracted to the wide-open spaces and pursue a wide variety of unstructured activities. Some of these activities have been detrimental to the site's archaeological resources. In addition, the site suffers vandalism due to the lack of routine on-site Department presence.

### **Proposed Uses and Development**

The Master Plan recommends that the site be used for education and interpretation of the archeological resources, as well as limited, compatible recreational pursuits. Interpretation and educational uses will be facilitated by the construction of a visitor center which will have exhibit space, a children's hands-on center, and multi-purpose space for classes and meetings. Compatible recreational uses that would be provided include picnicking, hiking, fishing, canoeing, cross-country skiing and interpretive education. Other passive recreation activities such as dog walking will be allowed in designated areas. Additional improvements include a new park maintenance building and archaeological service center, a pedestrian bridge with fishing platforms, a variety of passive recreation trails (paved, mown and boardwalk) and the restoration of the northeast pyramidal mound.

### **Public Involvement Activities**

A Public Participation Plan was developed by the WDNR and the public was given the opportunity to comment on the plan throughout its creation. Community outreach and consensus building have been the cornerstone of the Master Plan Revision. Throughout the planning process there were multiple opportunities for public dialogue and input. The public, the Friends of Aztalan, tribal leaders and tribal staff, local officials, and educators made substantial and valuable contributions. Informational materials and meeting announcements were regularly sent to a mailing list of approximately 300 interested participants. Local newspapers and radio stations covered meetings and the project's progress.

### **Significant Public Issues**

Respect for the site was the most significant issue identified by a wide range of participants during the public input process. Groups with a special interest in Aztalan State Park include Native Americans, who approach the project from a spiritual point of view and as their homeland; the Friends of Aztalan, who have worked for many years to support and promote the park; and the general public, which appreciates many aspects of the site. The Technical Advisory Team has brought archeological expertise to organizing the many physical and operational issues surrounding this project since 1990.

Several additional issues were of public concern throughout the design process. These four were fairly evenly weighted by the public in terms of importance: the recommendation to build a visitor center, the requiring of an admission sticker, significantly more archaeological interpretation, and prohibitions of some current recreational activities such as off-leash dog walking, and cross-country track practices and meets. The team, throughout this process, has done its best to respond to these concerns where possible and ameliorate them when faced with uses deemed incompatible with archaeological resource protection.

### **PROPERTY BOUNDARY EXPANSION**

A common theme during public outreach and other planning sessions was the importance of protecting the pristine views into and out of the site. The success of preserving and protecting the serenity and character of this ancient site will depend on the character of the surrounding lands. Important views are illustrated on the attached map titled "*Interpretive Restoration, Preservation Zones.*"

The master plan team recommends a "Development Buffer" to the project boundary to protect these views. We have identified an area surrounding the park that if developed, would severely impact the visual and cultural experience of an Aztalan visitor. This development buffer has been extended to roads where possible for clear management boundaries. The buffer includes an additional Native American mound on a feature called Signal Hill by some and Pipestone Hill by others, just west of the park across the highway<sup>1</sup>.

Currently agricultural fields surround the property. These fields are in private ownership by several different parties. While three sides of Aztalan have been deemed by the Jefferson County Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan (1999) as an Agricultural Preservation Area, residential lots would still be permitted within viewing distance from the park. On the remaining

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel A. Barret's *Ancient Aztalan*. (pp. 250-252)

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side and without protection, a variety of developments could occur within view of the park. The intent of the development buffer is to purchase scenic easements in the buffer area with fee title for Signal/Pipestone Hill<sup>2</sup>. The development buffer is 754 acres which would increase the approved project boundary from 265 to 1019 acres. Up to 100 acres could be purchased in fee title to connect the existing park to Signal/Pipestone Hill. *See Map B – Land Management Units.*

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<sup>2</sup> Signal/Pipestone Hill is an additional archaeological site that sits on the western side of County Highway Q within sight of Aztalan State Park. See Samuel A. Barrett's *Ancient Aztalan*, Page 250-252 for additional information.



## CHAPTER TWO: DRAFT MASTER PLAN

Aztalan is an ancient, sacred place. Its archeological treasures, Native American culture, and pristine appearance must be protected. Throughout the property's development, we must respect, explore and celebrate both the history and mystery of one of Wisconsin's first farming communities. We must inspire an aesthetic, and physical connection from the present to this amazing past at the edge of an ancient frontier.

### I. VISION

*Aztalan State Park is managed to preserve, protect and actively interpret Aztalan's unique archaeological resources as well as its scenic beauty while offering compatible recreational opportunities.*

### II. GOALS

- Promote and protect the site as the archaeological treasure it is known to be throughout the world.
- Balance resource protection, site access, interpretive opportunities and compatible recreational activities with the priority of the site as an archaeological treasure.
- Show and promote respect for the site through careful development and preservation measures that model the ecological sensitivities of Native American cultures and the site.
- Uncover the Native American story that can be told at this site explaining links between its location, ecological resources, landscape and archeological history; what we know, what we have found, and what was it like.
- Facilitate exploration of the site by visitors of all ages through a range of interactive interpretive experiences that illustrate the Middle Mississippian culture and community.
- Maintain the integrity and the aesthetics of the site, while also providing for ongoing archaeological investigation.
- Promote educational and environmental links to the community to foster ongoing partnerships and stewardship activities.

The park would include a range of new visitor amenities. These facilities would allow visitors to fully discover the significance of the Aztalan site to the region and the world through interpretive programs, continuing on-site excavations, and improved facilities. Recreational opportunities to a wider range of visitors would be enhanced with a series of short, interpretive trails that encircle the park and its various plant communities. A new visitor center, archaeological service center, and new main entrance would improve access and expand the opportunities for education and continuing research. A pedestrian bridge with fishing piers would allow access to and interpretation of the river as well as the eastern part of the site, complete with a scenic overlook. Boardwalks would take visitors through restored wetland communities and a new picnic shelter

would accommodate groups visiting the site for the day. A walk-in canoe launch would remain to provide quiet access to the river. As stated in the plan goals, all recreational activities would be designed to be compatible with primary priority of the site as an archaeological treasure.

### III. AZTALAN STATE PARK MANAGEMENT UNITS

#### **Land Management Classification Overview**

The Land Management Classifications are assigned according to Section NR 44.06(7) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. As stated in this code: “Special” would be the land management classification for the entire site due its unique focus on its world-renowned, archaeological resources. Although not a requirement of NR44, for purposes of this plan, the site has been further divided into separate management units, each with a specific focus and purpose. These units would be: an Archaeological Protection Unit, a Public Use Unit, an Administrative Unit, and a Visual Buffer Unit.

In contrast to other state parks, Aztalan has had a Technical Advisory Team in place for over a decade to guide archaeological interpretation, education, research as well as park development. Currently this team includes the State Archaeologist, members of the UWM and Michigan State University Anthropology Departments as well as members of the local government. It is anticipated that this group will continue to provide guidance to the property manager in negotiating the site’s various legal protections.

The specific land management units are based on a *Site Suitability Map* (See Map A) developed by the Technical Advisory Team. This map shows disturbance suitability zones based on the quantity and quality of archeological resources that may be found throughout the site as known, documented and predicted by archeologists. This map is founded on previous scholarship, investigation, and first hand knowledge of the site. The map depicts the likelihood of significant and sensitive archaeological finds; disturbance should be relegated to the least sensitive areas. The *Site Suitability Map* is to be reviewed and revised as additional excavations take place and new research is published and to correct any inaccuracies. The map should be consulted and archaeological surveys conducted prior to any excavation over 2” deep at the park. A survey of the various area limits would be created and made available to future design consultants and the property manager in the event that disruption needs to take place. See **Chapter 5, V. Existing Site Protections** for the legal requirements that must be met prior to any site disturbance.

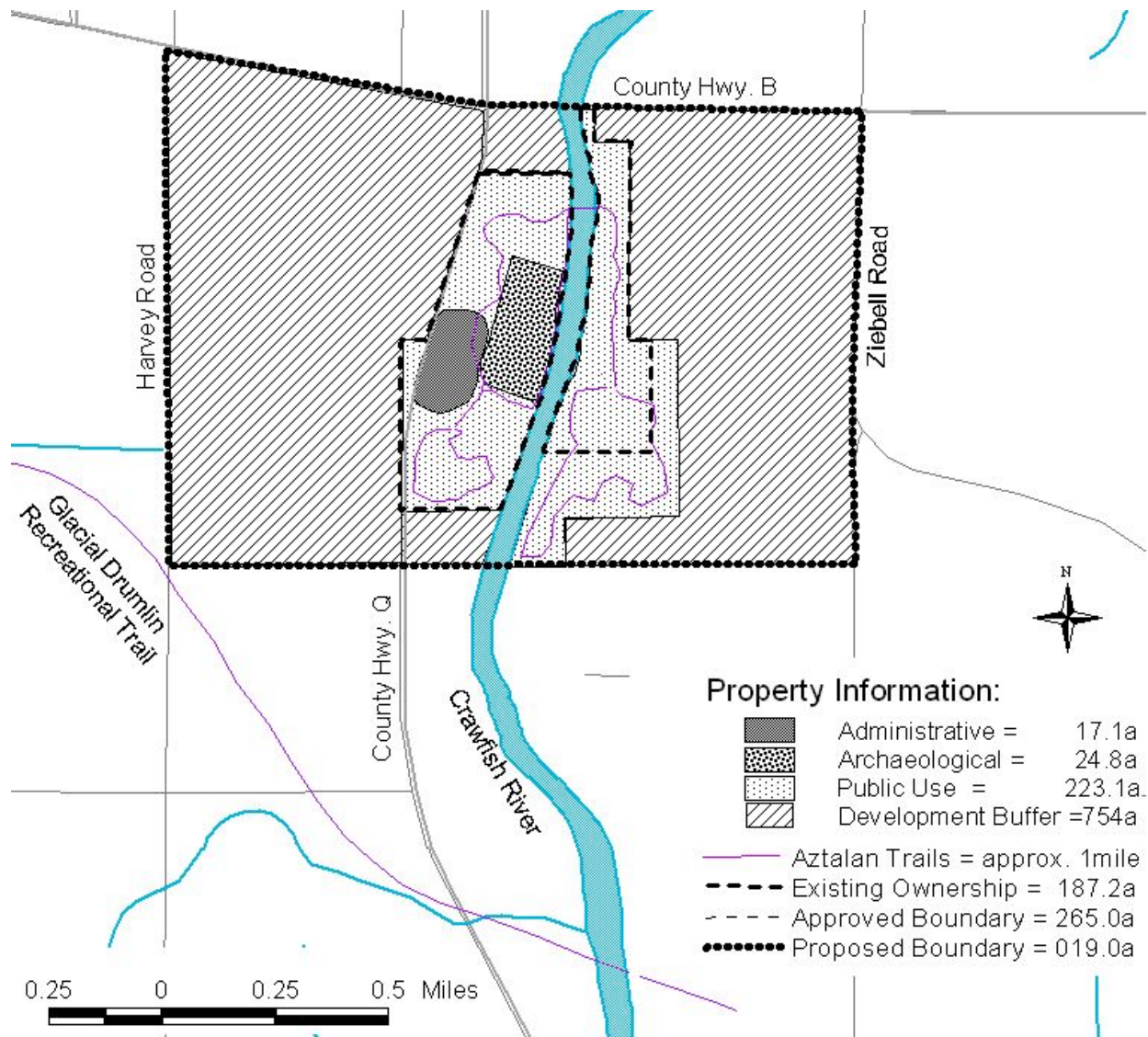
#### **Recreational Use Setting Sub-classifications**

Recreational Use Setting Sub-classifications are not available to the Special Management Area Classification.<sup>3</sup> Limited, compatible recreational uses are delineated within each land management unit.

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<sup>3</sup> NR44.06(7)

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**Map B – Land Management Units & Acreages**

### Site-wide Authorized Management Prescriptions

Several management measures would be taken throughout the entire park regardless of individual management units. It should be noted that the following provisions refer to the fee title land holdings only. They are as follows:

- Conduct approved archeological investigations before any soil disturbances greater than 2” deep in accordance with the legal protections listed in Chapter 5<sup>4</sup>.
- Remove and control the spread of invasive and aggressive plant species by means that do not disturb the soil structure, such as limited, chemical methods.

<sup>4</sup> The *Site Suitability Map* is to be reviewed and revised as additional excavations take place and new research is published and to correct any inaccuracies.

- Manage burrowing animals by mowing to protect archeological artifacts and to prevent injuries within the Area of No Disturbance. *See Map B - Land Management Units*; the Archeological Management Unit, the area with the highest concentration of archaeological resources.

### **Archeological Protection Unit (Approximately 25 acres)**

This fragile region alongside the west bank of the Crawfish River is the part of the site where the Mississippians built their homes, palisades<sup>5</sup>, and mounds. *See Map B - Land Management Units*. The portion adjacent to the river is often referred to as the habitation area. It contains the most valuable and highest number of archeological artifacts. The area would be designated a State Natural Area due to these archaeological resources. It is the area of highest protection within the property and with the exception of mown shoreline trails, no facilities would be provided for public use.

#### Management Objectives:

- Continue to protect and investigate archeological resources as the Technical Advisory Team and State Historical Society permits.
- Restore archaeological features such as the northeast pyramidal mound and the existing portion of the stockade walls, and implement a visual method of representing the rest of the stockade structure to facilitate site interpretation.
- Limit landscape maintenance in this management unit to protect archaeological resources.
- Develop a trail system that will encourage on-trail use, interpretation, and "flow" to the balance of the property.
- Continue shoreline restoration to stabilize riverbank erosion and re-establish native vegetation.
- Provide archaeological interpretation at each interpretive trail node.
- Curtail the types of public use to those that will not have negative impacts on the archaeological resources.

#### Facilities/Activities:

The highest priorities for this property within this management unit is the protection of its archaeological resources. This protection is accomplished by making sure that the soil is not disturbed. Archaeological materials could be present at any time even on the surface of the ground (as pushed up from each winter's freeze- thaw cycles) or at any level below the surface of the soil. While the activity of walking is an acceptable use in this area, the following activities disturb the soil and therefore will be prohibited within this management unit:

- Sledding
- X-country training or meets
- Any type of dog walking

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<sup>5</sup> See Samuel A. Barrett's *Ancient Aztalan*.

Shoreline-Fishing – The river shoreline along the Aztalan property has severe slopes. Fishing activity along this shoreline increases soil erosion into the river degrading fish habitat and disturbing archaeological resources. Fishing along this shoreline will continue to be allowed until the completion of the pedestrian bridge with fishing decks. Over time the trees within these shoreline areas would be removed and the areas would be restored to native grassy and shrubby vegetation to stabilize the underlying soil structure.

Canoe Walk-In Area – This area would remain as is. In the event that archaeological resources are found in this area, the canoe launch will be closed until such time as these resources are documented and the site is approved for public use by the state archaeologist. See the attached *Plan Summary Map* showing Preferred Management Alternative for location.

Additional Development:

A soft-surface (such as mown grass) trail would connect the pedestrian bridge to the canoe area south along the terrace/upper, west side of the river's edge if deemed feasible given the shoreline drop-offs and archaeological resource limitations. A soft-surface mown grass trail would also connect interpretive nodes within this area. No additional development would be permitted within this unit. Management of bluegrass turf would be the least disruptive to archaeological resources.

Authorized Management Activities & Management Prescriptions

- Continue archaeological investigations as approved by the property's technical team and/or the WI State Archaeologist.
- Lightly, not aggressively, maintain existing bluegrass throughout the unit as its root structure is the least disruptive to the existing soil strata, which protects archaeological resources.
- In conjunction with state archaeologists, restore Northeast Mound.
- In conjunction with state archaeologists, plant a strip of tallgrass prairie species to represent the former stockade perimeter walls of the plaza area. The plaza area will be mown bluegrass turf.
- Provide a soft-surface (such as mown grass) shoreline trail to connect the trail ends at the pedestrian bridge and the canoe launch area as well as the interpretive nodes.
- Maintain the tallgrass prairie plant "stockade wall" on the perimeter of this plaza area by a strip-prescribed burn on a periodic basis.
- Continue ongoing shoreline restoration project to stabilize soils on the bank by installing secured erosion control matting and revegetation plantings.
- Mow a 2000' shoreline trail connection from the pedestrian bridge location to the canoe launch area.

**Public Use Unit** (Approximately 223 acres)

This is the area outside of both the Archaeological Protection and Administration Units but within the current property boundary. *See Map B - Land Management Units*. This area has been and will continue to be an important recreational site for local residents as well as for persons visiting the site for archeological purposes (either research or education).

In this area a visitor would find: parking areas, the marker mounds, a walk-in canoe launch, picnic areas, a picnic shelter and a low impact trail that circles the site. A main trail would begin

on the site-side of the Visitor center plaza. This trail would connect nodes that would each contain interpretive signage and a bench; a return loop would be along the shoreline as mentioned in the Archaeological Protection Unit. The first section of this main trail would connect at least the first four nodes with an accessible trail surface. An additional loop would take a visitor over the pedestrian bridge and to the east side of the property. This east trail would be boardwalk where necessary and would connect to a vantage point at a high spot to overlook the site to the west. Fishing platforms would be present adjacent or connected to the pedestrian bridge. See attached *Plan Summary (Preferred Alternative) Map*.

The materials, colors and shapes of signage or other development within this area are to blend into the rolling landscape. The intent is to minimize visual disruption from the views within the property. This area is to be managed to meet all of the project goals in terms of careful, respectful, limited development to foster, encourage and facilitate the interpretive and recreational experiences of all visitors who come to the Aztalan State Park.

Recreation/Interpretation Management Objectives:

- Provide an improved site entrance and internal roadway to connect facilities.
- Provide limited hiking, fishing and picnicking opportunities.
- Provide up to a mile of mown grass, paved and boardwalk, limited-recreation trails for a system of interpretive, teaching nodes, and interpretive signage on the west side of the river.
- Provide up to 1/2 mile mown grass and boardwalk trails with interpretive signage and a scenic overlook on the eastern part of the property for hiking, picnicking and maintenance.

Existing Facilities/Activities:

- Picnic Areas - Picnic areas within this unit would remain.
- Parking Areas - The lower and upper parking areas will remain however the exact configuration may change with the new entrance and interior roadway.
- Restroom Facilities - All existing pit toilets will be removed. A new picnic shelter near the lower parking lot will have flush toilets. In addition, the new visitor center will have flush toilets.
- Sledding and Cross-Country training or meets will not be allowed due to the state protection priority of the area's archaeological resources.

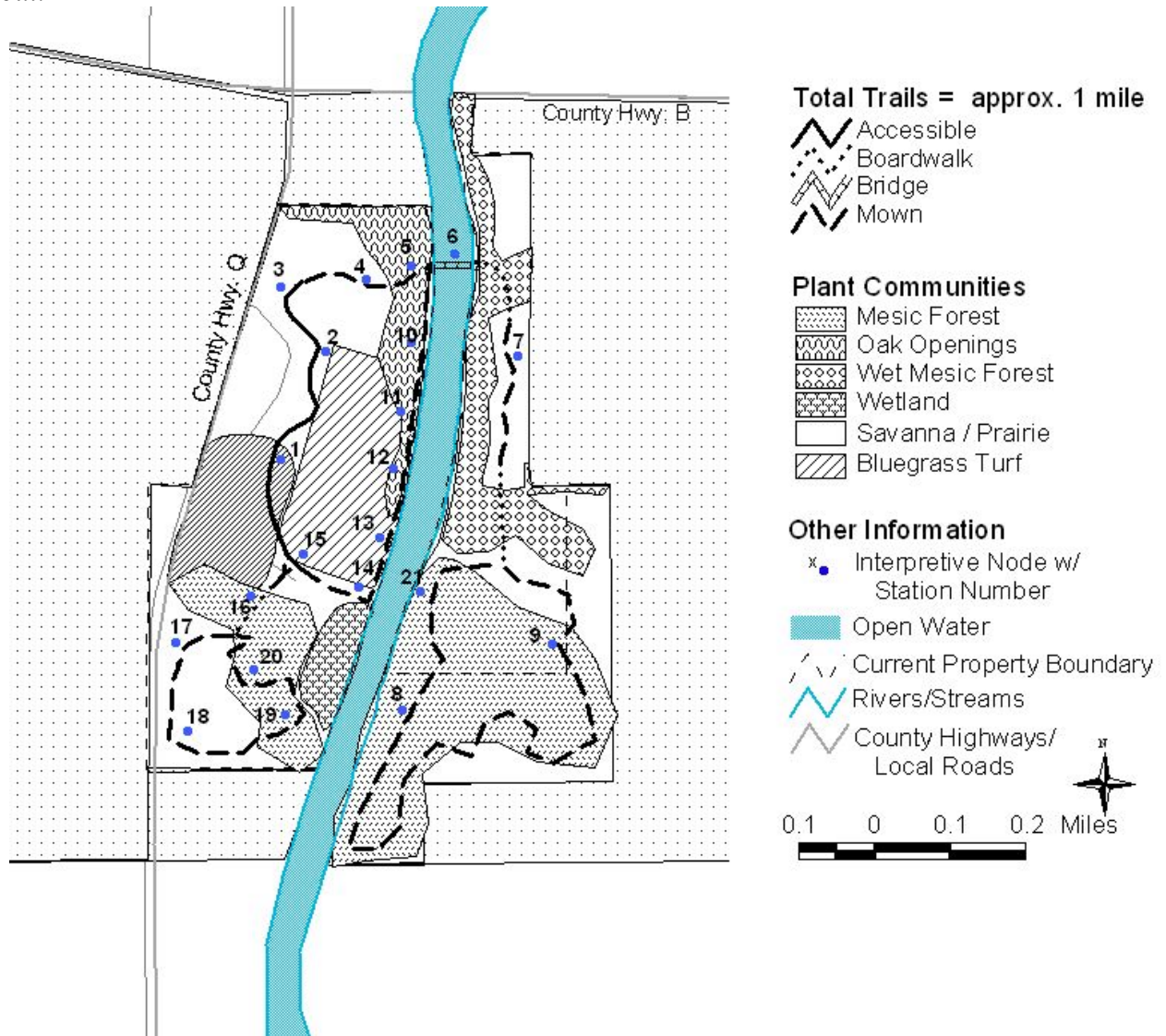
Additional Development:

The following site components are shown on the preferred alternative site plan. (*See attached Plan Summary (Preferred Alternative) Map*).

New Park Road - a new safer entrance to the park would be created south of the existing entrance for better entry and exit sight lines. Coordination with Jefferson County Highway Department will be required. An interior road would be located closer to Highway Q and would connect visitors to the new Interpretive Center as well as other site amenities. This roadway would be gutterless, so pavement runoff would sheet drain and filter into adjacent, native-grassed swales. This measure will reduce not only reduce initial construction costs, but would also reduce future maintenance costs, be more ecologically healthy to the surrounding ecosystems and would allow for natural groundwater recharging.

Picnic Shelter - a new shelter would be constructed near the lower parking lot. This is the area already disturbed with the construction of the pit toilet buildings. This shelter would be for up to 50 visitors, approximately 52 x 30'. This shelter would contain flush toilets, as well as a serving room with a sink and a bi-fold window/serving counter. It would have the ability to be enclosed for year-round use. It would be served by the existing parking lot. The design of this shelter would match the visitor center in materials and color.

Interpretive Trails – several trails would provide a range of archaeological, ecological, interpretive and recreation opportunities for a range of visitors for passive, recreational uses. These trails would be mown, paved or accessible surfaces. *See Map C – Conceptual Trail Layout.*



**Map C – Conceptual Trail Layout**

West Side Main Trail – approximately 1/3 mile - This trail would be classified as a moderately developed<sup>6</sup> trail. It would be located generally between the Archaeological

<sup>6</sup> As noted in NR44.07(3)(g). <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/nr/nr044.pdf>



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Protection and the Administrative Units. An ADA accessible trail section (possibly asphalt) would connect four main interpretive nodes along the east side of the Visitor Center. *See Map C – Conceptual Trail Layout.* This would connect the existing canoe launch parking lot to the Visitor Center's outdoor plaza and up to the existing picnic area to the north parking lot. Additional soft-surfaced (such as mown short or tall grass prairie) extensions of this same trail would connect smaller, more detailed interpretive signs to the pedestrian bridge and then south to the canoe launch to create a loop.

West Side South Trail – approximately ¼ mile – Would also be a primitive, mown trail intersecting with the Main Trail at its southern end, west of the canoe launch/picnic shelter parking lot. The trail would continue over a wetland with a boardwalk to the southernmost both open and wooded area of the property.

East Trail – Approximately 1/2 mile – Would be a primitive<sup>7</sup>, mown trail coming off of the pedestrian bridge over no less than two boardwalk stretches to a loop trail and overlook site.

**Interpretive Nodes** – These nodes are meant to accommodate a small group of visitors or students off-trail, as they read and or discuss the interpretive material shown on each exhibit. Each node would be a small, mown-grass or paved (as specified by its connecting trail above) area, approximately 10' in diameter with an interpretive sign panel and simple seating (a stone or wood bench to accommodate longer discussions and/or older visitors) on its perimeter. No overhead vegetation would be permitted, as this would impair views from one part of the site to another. While this master plan specifically recommends interpretive nodes for the main trail, additional nodes would be considered for the other two trails as well.

**Interpretive Signage** – While this master plan specifically recommends signage for the main trail, additional interpretive signage would be considered for the other two trails as well. Additional interpretive information can be found in the document: Goldstein, Lynn. *Aztalan Research: Preparing for Park Interpretation and Planning.* 1999. Specific design criteria are listed below in authorized actions. To give a good picture of how this ancient civilization lived all of the interpretive topics below should be covered.

History of Archaeological Investigations	Dates of Occupation
Cultural Affiliation	Social Organization
Site Layout	Houses
Platform Mounds	Stockade
General Subsistence	Agriculture
Hunting	Fishing
Collecting of Wild Plants & Mussels	Ceramics
Stone Tools	Other Artifacts
Appearance & Manner of Dress	Religious Beliefs
Recreation	Warfare
Abandonment	

**Pedestrian Bridge** - A new pedestrian bridge would provide access to a trail and boardwalk system on the east side of the river. The bridge would be designed wide enough to allow for fishing. This would help preserve riverbanks, reducing erosion.

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<sup>7</sup> As noted in NR44.07(3)(e). <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/nr/nr044.pdf>

East Side Elements - This area has not been open to visitors and the property manager would retain the right to close the area should vandalism or abuse threaten the area's archaeological resources. A scenic overlook at the highpoint of this area would provide views of the Crawfish River and the entire Aztalan site. Boardwalks would connect the trail through wet portions. The addition of on-site staff and additional patrols would reduce vandalism.

#### Recreation/Interpretation Authorized Management Activities and Prescriptions:

- Create and maintain trails (*See Map C - Conceptual Trail Layout & the attached Plan Summary (Preferred Alternative)*).
  - Create a paved, accessible trail section to connect nodes #1, 2, 3 and 15.
- Connect to a mown prairie or natural-surfaced, contour trail (trails that parallel the prevailing slope and do not exceed half of the side slope) on the west side and subsequently east side of the river as well as the southern portion of the site as described above.
- All trail designs must be approved by the South Central Region Senior Landscape Architect.
- Create and maintain interpretive nodes as described above.
  - The signs would be large enough to be legible for both old and young visitor and would be of neutral, prairie-toned colors and materials.
  - The backside of the signs would as well be painted with a camouflage pattern in the same, prairie-toned colors, or of a material, which has this type of non-obtrusive character.

#### Vegetation Management Objectives

- Restore or recreate approximately 200 acres of native plant communities throughout this management unit to such as the wetland, prairie, savanna, woodland and riparian zones as shown on *Map C - Conceptual Trail Layout*.
- The main purpose of vegetation management under the plan is to restore or recreate native plant communities similar to what the area would have supported historically, to improve area biodiversity and to provide natural scenic beauty. The long-term, recommended plant communities are discussed within Chapter 5 - Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat. Each management unit identifies particular management actions.

#### Vegetation Authorized Management Activities and Prescriptions:

- Accomplish general wetland and riparian preservation to include associated restoration and management practices.
- Recreate tall and shortgrass prairie in upland areas to include associated restoration and management practices and the mown interpretive trail sections.
- Recreate woodland areas to include associated restoration and management practices
- Continue to remove stumps, with archeological investigation before removal.
- Monitor possible erosion on all trails and relocate trails to a less severe location when hardening measures are considered.
  - Prepare native plant community restoration or recreation sites with mechanical means, chemical means, or prescribed fire (if deemed safe for possible archaeological resources by the property manager).

**Administrative Unit** (Approximately 17 acres)

This area would contain the most developed facilities in the park and have the most intensive uses. In this area a park visitor would find: new parking lots, a visitor center, a new entrance plaza, a plaza overlooking the site (with site - representational sculptural pavement elements and a native American statue), open space for ceremonies and reenactments, a council ring, and a new maintenance building that includes an archeological service center.

The materials, colors and shapes of signage or other development within this area are to blend into the rolling landscape. The intent is to minimize visual disruption from the views within the property. This area is to be managed to meet all of the project goals in terms of careful, respectful, limited development to foster, encourage and facilitate the interpretive and recreational experiences of all visitors who come to the Aztalan State Park.

Management Objectives:

- Create facilities to improve understanding of the importance and sacredness of this site.
- Provide opportunities for wider knowledge of the site to the surrounding area, region and nation.
- Create limited opportunities for recreation
- Create a building foundation and surrounding landscape plan to mitigate building impacts and showcase native plant materials.

Existing Facilities:

Existing picnic areas would be relocated within this unit to mown areas between the bus parking and the visitor center.

Additional Development:

All new structures would blend into the site with color, materials and style. They would not dominate views into or out of the site.

Visitor Center - An approximately 20,000 square foot structure that would be located approximately where the middle shelter/parking lot is now to reduce additional site disturbance. This building will have a multipurpose room for classes and meetings, an exhibit space, a children's hands-on center, a small theater / lecture room, a gift shop, restrooms, and staff offices. The area around the visitor center will include a plaza and outdoor space for picnicking, and other informal gatherings. The Center should meet energy efficiency standards, e.g. full spectrum and when possible, natural daylighting, on-site building runoff management with planted swales and rain gardens, less toxic building materials, renewable materials and recycled materials.

The following is proposed square footages of the visitor center:

a. Lobby	330
b. Coatroom	112
c. Multifunctional Room (80 Person capacity)	1,600
d. Exhibit Space	6,400
e. Children's Hands-on Center	1,200

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f. Small theater or lecture hall (99 Person cap.)	1,000
g. Gift Shop	750
h. Restrooms	700
i. Staff offices	1,200
j. Food Service	500
k. Research Facility Visible to visitors	750
l. Mechanical	300
m. Circulation / Gross Factor	<u>4,500</u>
	<b>19,342 S.F.</b>

Archeological Lab and Service Building - This structure will provide for ongoing site maintenance activities and will act as an archeological field lab. It would mirror the visitor center in style, color and building materials. It would include secure storage, indoor vehicle storage, outdoor parking, a simple kitchen, showers and toilets and archaeological lab space. Size and type of construction

The following are components of the Lab/Service Building:

a. Field Lab	400
b. Showers & Toilets	700
c. Secure storage	200
d. Outdoor Parking	
e. Vehicle storage	1,200
f. Concrete floors	
g. Overhead doors	
h. Simple kitchen	
i. Circulation / Gross Factor	<u>750</u>
	<b>3,230 S.F.</b>

### Parking

- Three landscaped and screened parking lots would accommodate up to 100 vehicles at the visitor center.
- An additional lot would accommodate up to 5 buses as shown on the attached *Plan Summary – (Preferred Alternative)Map*.
- The islands within these parking lots would be contoured as swales to catch and filter parking lot runoff in a sheeting fashion reducing the velocity and amount of parking lot runoff contaminated with automobile drippings. In addition, these parking lot islands would be established with native prairie grass. In addition the parking lot would be sheet drained with no curb and gutter into shallow rain gardens planted with native perennials and grasses. Once again, this measure would encourage a less dramatic and more ecologically sound way of handling contaminated parking lot runoff. These measures will not only reduce initial construction costs, but would also reduce future maintenance costs, help minimize water quality impacts from stormwater runoff, and allow for groundwater recharging. .

### General Authorized Management Activities

- Develop national-scale tourism and promotional efforts.
- Make tourism connections to Cahokia, Dickson Mounds, and other Mississippian sites.
- Provide educational opportunities within the visitor center and in other outdoor portions of the area.

- Develop outreach program specifically with Native American groups in Wisconsin to coordinate programs and learning opportunities.
- Create a non-native to native plant community landscape plan that allows for picnicking uses closer to the building on non-native or native, short-grass turf that transitions to tall grass prairie/savanna away from the building out to the restored or recreated native plant communities and recreational areas.
  - Manage native grass areas for this unit with twice yearly mowing or by prescribed burning if deemed acceptable.
  - Continue to remove stumps, with archeological investigation before removal.
  - Continue to mow turf immediately adjacent to the building if deemed necessary.

### **Development Buffer Unit** (Approximately 745 acres)

This area is immediately surrounding the current state ownership as shown on *Map B - Land Management Units*. An additional Native American mound located on a feature called Signal Hill by some and Pipestone Hill by others exists in this area as well.<sup>8</sup> The entire area is proposed for boundary expansion.

The area is currently agricultural fields and is in private ownership by several different parties. While the surrounding property on three sides of Aztalan has been deemed by the Jefferson County Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan (1999) as an Agricultural Preservation Area, residential lots could still be permitted within viewing distance from the park. The property manager would work with local governments to include this area in their Open Space plans.

Based on the recommendations from many stakeholders and the Technical Advisory Team as well as the referenced maps, this Visual Buffer Management Unit property is valuable to the site in that it is within the viewshed of the current park. This area would be approved for protection preferably by conservation easements or purchase of development rights but also by fee title if necessary. A range of protection options would be explored, such as the purchase of development rights for approximately 400 acres of land on the west side of Hwy Q. At minimum, scenic easement purchases from the owners of the approximately 773 acres of buffer surrounding the site. *See Map B - Land Management Units* would protect the much-admired views of the surrounding countryside and maintain the integrity of the Aztalan experience. Signal Hill / Pipestone Hill would be purchased in fee title. See the Adjacent Land Use & Transportation Plan for additional information regarding the zoning and the development potential of the property within the project boundary.

### Management Objectives:

- Preserve and enhance the scenic view from the park and protect any archaeological resources that may be present within the management area.

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel A. Barret's *Ancient Aztalan*. (pp. 250-252)

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- Acquire development rights, scenic easements or fee title for the entire development buffer area.
- Recreate a native ecosystem within this area (if owned in fee) such as open Savanna to complement the park vistas.
- Provide for recreation that would be visually and ecologically compatible with archaeological resource preservation such as a mown trail in fee title area/s.
- Allow for continuing archaeological investigations where possible in fee title area/s.

### Existing Facilities:

There are no facilities within this currently, privately owned area.

### Additional Development:

This plan would permit mown grass trail loop/s through this buffer area for non-motorized uses that would connect to the Aztalan internal trails in fee title areas. If possible, a trail connection to the Glacial Drumlin Trail would be encouraged as well.

### Authorized Management Activities:

Recreate/restore and maintain a Savanna/Grassland Prairie plant community within the buffer area to respect and foster an appropriate aesthetic to the interpretation of the Aztalan site as well as to improve the biodiversity of the areas' ecosystems. Possible management actions may include mechanical means, chemical means, or prescribed fire.

## **V. REAL-ESTATE MANAGEMENT**

The park manager will be the WDNR representative responsible for inspecting and maintaining the property. Landowners within the project boundary will be contacted periodically to see if there are any concerns or questions about any phase of management, development or acquisition. The DNR Land Acquisition Handbook should be consulted for procedures for contacting and documenting landowner contacts.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION PLAN**

The park manager will be the Department representative responsible for answering public inquiries on property development, operations, law enforcement and maintenance.

Currently interpretive programs are announced in the local paper. The site's property manager communicates development, maintenance, and approved archaeological excavations to the public.

In the future, the property manager will maintain a mailing list of persons or groups interested in receiving information about important management or use issues. Mailings and news releases may be used to notify the public of significant developments on the property. It is recommended that current interpretive and educational programming as well as communication of onsite events continues into the future.

## **VII. PROJECT PHASING AND GENERAL COST ESTIMATE**

This following phasing plan considers the mechanisms by which the Department funds development projects. This phasing plan also considers public comment throughout the master

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plan project. Project participants found having to pay a park entrance fee acceptable only when additional site facilities were added.

To acknowledge these two contrasting constraints, initial phases of work are focused on smaller, very visible projects that would impact every visitor's experience of the site. Larger and more expensive projects are phased directly afterward in hopes of capitalizing on the interest and momentum generated by initial improvements. Later phases include site aspects that would complete the full range of visitor experiences.

**Phase One:**

**\$ 2,362,825.00**

1. A GPS survey of the *Site Suitability Map* Boundaries in a format for property Manager's Use as well as future Design & Construction Contractors to "inches" degree accuracy.
2. New Entrance Signs on both entrances to the park and on the highway.
3. Base course/gravel entry road to the South Parking Lot
4. Site electric and water services
5. Maintenance Bldg. / Archaeological Service Building w/ Gravel Parking Lot<sup>9</sup>
6. West Side Trails with Interpretive Nodes, Sign Panels
7. Shoreline Vegetation Restoration w/ Exotics Control
8. Associated Archaeological Investigations and Infrastructure Improvements
9. Property brochures and an illustration of the proposed Visitor Center for fundraising purposes.

**Phase Two:**

**\$ 5,940,000.00**

1. Visitor Center w/ Plaza & Parking Lots, Signage, Lighting and Building Landscaping<sup>10</sup>
2. Department Entrance Booth
3. Asphalt Binder course for New Entry Road and Parking Lots
4. Associated Archaeological Investigations and Infrastructure Improvements
5. Native Community Restoration Maintenance

**Phase Three:**

**\$ 714,700.00**

1. Reconstruct Northeast Mound & Stockade
2. Park Shelter w/ Flush Toilets
3. Native Prairie, Oak Savanna, Lowland Plant Community Restorations
4. Associated Archaeological Investigations and Infrastructure Improvements

**Phase Four**

**\$ 1,243,400.00**

1. Pedestrian Bridge with Fishing Pier, Boardwalks and East Trails
2. Associated Archaeological Investigations and Infrastructure Improvements
3. Native Community Restoration Maintenance

**Total \$ 10,260,925.00**

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<sup>9</sup> No curb & gutter

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a document the Department prepares to inform decision-makers of the environmental effects of proposed actions. It serves as the primary Department document for assessing relevant areas of environmental concern and allowing for a reasonably informed prediction of a proposal's effect on the environment.<sup>11</sup>

### I. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

(See Chapter 5 for complete descriptions of the area's cultural and natural resources.)

#### Historical and Archaeological Features

The entire site holds unique and sensitive historical and archeological features. Archaeologists from the Wisconsin State Historical Society, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Michigan State and other institutions currently conduct field research here. Their expertise has been made available to the property manager in protecting this valuable resource. Their expertise and information has also been taken into account throughout the entire master plan process. *Map A the Site Suitability Map* prioritizes the areas of highest archaeological significance and the relative amount of disruption the various parts of the site could withstand. Appropriate surveys would be done prior to any construction activities to assure no known or unknown sites are impacted or are mitigated as allowed by law.

#### Development Projects

This master plan recommends a variety of future capital developments on the Aztalan State Park property. Projects include a new 20,000 square foot Visitor Center, parking lots, an entrance station, restrooms, picnic shelters, pedestrian bridge, roadways, trails, boardwalks and a new maintenance and archeological service center.

All contractors are expected to require and utilize erosion control practices, which adhere to the Wisconsin Construction Site Best Management Practice Handbook Guidelines, in the bid specifications of all construction jobs. Volunteer labor groups should be supervised to hold to these same standards. Any construction activities near the water will require erosion control practices to minimize the amount of soil erosion off the slope and into the river.

Negative impacts associated with these development projects could be severe if precautions are not observed. The extent of impermeable surfaces will increase, thus increasing stormwater run-off. However, swales and shallow detention ponds planted with native perennials and grasses (recently referred to as Rain Gardens) and other more ecologically sound storm water management techniques would mitigate stormwater run-off. Restoration of native prairie grass / oak openings throughout the site will also help to manage storm water runoff by providing dramatically higher rates of infiltration than that of standard bluegrass as well as groundwater recharge.

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter NR 150 Environmental Analysis and Review Procedures for Department Actions establishes the Department's requirement for preparing this document.



There will be unavoidable short-term negative visual impacts during the construction of the Interpretive Center. Consideration would be given during the planning stages to minimize the disruption to visitors of the site during construction. The visitor center is tucked into the base of a large hill adjacent to Highway Q. This not only “hides” the building from visitor views both into and out of the site but also places the building in an area that has already been disturbed and investigated. Innovative energy efficiency and “green” building techniques for energy systems, waste water, storm water and other items, as described in “LEED Green Building Rating System<sup>12</sup>”, could also help minimize the impact of the new development. The building will be designed to blend into the landscape.

### **Recreation and Public Use**

Public use of the site is expected to greatly increase with the construction of the visitor center and additional interpretive opportunities. There is an inherent risk that this increase number of visitors would negatively impact the site. These impacts could include increased littering, vandalism, potential overuse of picnic areas and trails as well as potential illegal activities. Increasing on-site staff and patrols will alleviate certain detrimental effects. A policy would be implemented that no additional visitors will be allowed to enter the park when the lots are full. These limits would be considered when taking reservations for the picnic shelter and/or school group visits. In addition, the park manager along with the Regional Park Supervisor and the Technical Advisory Team would evaluate overuse and close park areas when needed for short or longer periods.

Trail length and variety will expand to both sides of the river over a pedestrian bridge and through a variety of plant communities. New viewing areas in the habitation area will be designated. Fishing spots will be expanded to areas along the proposed pedestrian bridge. The existing, walk-in canoe landing will remain in place. Picnic facilities will be expanded to serve an increase in school groups and visitors.

Some recreational pursuits that are incompatible with archaeological resource protection, such as off-leash dog walking, sledding on the mounds and cross-country practice/meets, will no longer be permitted. On-leash dog walking will continue to be allowed within designated management units. Cross-country skiing will be allowed on designated trails. The property manager will be responsible for monitoring impacts and restricting use as necessary to protect the site’s archaeological resources.

New trails on the east side of the river would increase the potential for vandalism to the Native American mounds and native vegetation. Littering and other site disruptions would need to be monitored and managed.

Facilities, roads, and trails are designed to minimize archaeological impact, earth moving and vegetation removal. New trails will be paved near the visitor center and elsewhere will be mown-grass or surfaced to minimize environmental impact. It is expected that the vast majority of the new users will stay on the paved paths and new trails and have minimal additional impact to the environment. Trail sections would be connected through wet areas with floating boardwalks for minimal ground disruption.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.usgbc.org/programs/leed.htm>

## **Resource Management**

**VEGETATION** - The main purpose of vegetation management under the plan is to restore or recreate native plant communities similar to what the area would have supported historically, to improve area biodiversity and to provide natural scenic beauty. The long-term, recommended plant communities are discussed within Chapter 5 - Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat. Each management unit identifies particular management actions.

**WILDLIFE** - Wildlife resources would be affected over the long-term by the vegetative management on the property. As non-native invasive plant species are removed a greater variety of native Wisconsin plants are expected to flourish. The overall impact on vegetation and wildlife would be an increase in native plant and animal diversity and preservation and restoration of native habitat and a decrease in those species associated with monocultural systems. Short-term visual impacts would occur during restoration of the shoreline, oak savanna, prairie and wetland restoration areas. These impacts may include tree and brush removal, controlled burning and selective use of herbicides.

## **Endangered or Threatened Species**

No threatened or endangered species have been documented at Aztalan to date. If rare species were discovered on the property, they would be managed for long-term protection and enhancement.

## **Water Quality and Aquatic Resources**

Construction of new roads, parking lots, and the Visitor Center could cause construction site erosion. Standard construction site erosion control practices will be used to minimize potential erosion and siltation.. Restoration of natural plant communities on the shores of the Crawfish River and elsewhere on the site would be beneficial to water quality, aquatic resources, and fish habitat. Short-term visual impacts could be expected from the construction of the pedestrian bridge with a fishing pier as well as shoreline restoration activities. These could include straw bales, filter fabric, etc, associated with siltation protection measures. De-watering procedures may also be needed to construct the bridge foundations.

## **Economic Effects**

The local tourism economy is expected to see positive impacts due to an increase in numbers of visitors to the area.

## **Transportation / Traffic**

Aztalan State Park is located approximately three miles from Interstate I-94 and half way between the two largest metropolitan areas in Wisconsin, Madison and Milwaukee. The attraction of a Visitors Center is going to increase traffic in the area both in the park and in the surrounding communities providing services. Current visitation is approximately 80,000 per year. Anticipated increases may be up to 500,000 additional visitors per year. Existing roadways within the area are currently adequate to handle the additional visitor traffic. Existing signage will be improved on major roadways surrounding Aztalan State Park to direct visitors to the park.

The entrance road to the park will be relocated for greater visibility, increased sight lines and therefore safety on County Highway Q. The interior roads will direct the majority of the traffic to the Visitors Center parking lots. Bus parking will be available just past the Visitors Center.

Parking will continue to be available in the existing far northern and southern parking areas. Short term impacts to be expected is a potential influx of new visitors traveling both by car and by bus upon the dedication and opening of the Visitor Center.

### **Fiscal Effects**

Upon approval of the plan minimal fiscal impacts are anticipated. Once the development phases of the plan commence, increasing levels of staffing, supplies, services, maintenance activities and utilities would be incurred. Currently park stickers are not required to enter the park. It is recommended that the state park sticker entrance fee be implemented. Public input throughout the process supported a state park sticker entrance fee as development, interpretive programming and services increased.

Once the visitor center is built, an anticipated five-fold increase in visitation would significantly increase park and recreation program revenue.

Staff levels would increase as the improvements are built. After the Visitor Center and other interpretive items are complete additional staff would be needed. This was noted in the Governor's Historic Sites Task Force Report, dated 1990, and may include:

- One Natural Resources Property Supervisor

- One Natural Resources Educator with an archaeological background

- Two Park Rangers

The master plan team agrees with these recommendations and also acknowledges that final staffing levels will be determined based upon needs and funding.

### **III. SIGNIFICANCE OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS**

The plan is expected to have potential cumulative effects to the surrounding community. While the majority of the land surrounding the park has been designated as Agricultural Preservation Area it is anticipated that additional development will continue to spread from the City of Lake Mills. The park would increase demand for visitor services and it's associated development. For example, county highway Q may have to eventually be expanded.

Development of the park would increase visitation to the Lake Mills Historical Society site. This could increase demand for additional parking on their grounds.

### **IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF RISK AND UNCERTAINTY IN PREDICTING IMPACTS**

There are very low risks associated with the proposed management and development of Aztalan State Park. Prescribed fire to maintain healthy prairie plant communities would be used only under highly controlled circumstances by trained and experienced technicians. All structures, restrooms and other facilities would meet current codes and building standards.

In the instance where overuse of the various resources becomes apparent, park admittance would be adjusted.

**V. SIGNIFICANCE OF PRECEDENT**

Approval of this management plan would not significantly influence future decisions on other Department property master plans.

**VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTROVERSY OVER ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

Many resource management actions of this master plan are expected to create little or no controversy. The public helped develop and select the preferred alternative and was given opportunities for review and comment throughout the entire process. Please refer to Chapter 5 for a summary of public involvement. The property will continue to be open to the public through a visitor center, trails, improved picnic areas and with modified, less disruptive recreational uses.

However concern still exists within the archaeological expert community that the proposed development projects be accomplished in a careful manner, respectful of the site, its heritage and history, e.g. no plastic headdresses or tomahawks for sale in the visitor center. In addition there are concerns regarding non-traditional uses of an archaeological site, such as cross country track meets, and unauthorized off-leash dog walking.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ALTERNATIVES TO THE MASTER PLAN

### I. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALTERNATIVES

A master plan alternative is a grouping of several compatible options for resource management, recreational development and public use of a Department property. The content of an alternative should be compatible with the property designation, the draft vision and goals, the property capabilities, and the regional analysis.

The archeological scholarship and research that has taken place on and about this site is formidable and has been consulted in the preparation of the three Alternatives. A thorough inventory was conducted of the plant communities, soils, water resources, archeological resources, and land use and transportation. Maps were used throughout the public process to help the public understand the physical constraints and the opportunities of the site. An extensive public involvement process included The Great Lakes Intertribal Council, local government and civic organizations, neighboring landowners and the general public. Community outreach and consensus building was a cornerstone of this project. A list of meetings and summary of stakeholder opinion is included in Chapter 5. Archeologists determined which portions of the site were most suitable for structures and other improvements and the Technical Advisory Team developed a *Site Suitability Plan* to serve as a framework for the three master plan options.

A program was then developed by the Technical Advisory Committee From the above input and inventory draft vision statement and goals, and eventually a specific list of improvements.

A public design charrette summarized all the foregoing information and laid the groundwork for the three preliminary plans for Aztalan State Park, which were then refined by the Technical Advisory team. The most important element common to all three plans is a commitment to respect, protect and preserve the archeological resources on the site. The three options were shown to the Ho-Chunk, the Town of Aztalan, the Lake Mills Aztalan Historical Society, local officials, and to the general public at an open house in Lake Mills. Comments were recorded, reviewed and analyzed from each meeting.

#### **Common Elements In All Three Plans**

- Protect and preserve the archeological resources on the site.
- Protect the pristine views into and out of the site. The success of preserving and protecting this ancient site will turn on how undeveloped the adjacent land remains.
- Visitor Center
- Un-programmed open space
- Interpretive trails
- Hiking trails
- Access to the east side of the Crawfish River
- New picnic shelters
- Flush toilets
- Plaza for ceremonies and activities
- Boardwalks

The following sections identify the key differences between the three options, their impacts and the basis for selecting the preferred alternative.

## II. MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE ONE

### *Plan Summary*

(For larger version of plan see the attached *Option One Map*)

Option One has the least disturbance to what park users would call the current Aztalan State Park. The Visitor Center and parking is in the southwest corner of the site and screened from the habitation area by woods. It features uninterrupted views of the site and trails that skirt the edges of the habitation area. Visitors are encouraged to stay on the trails, however they are allowed to leave the trail system and wander through the habitation area in this option.



### *Site Circulation*

#### *Entry Sequence:*

Signs along Hwy. B direct visitors to the site. To create a sense of arrival, wayfinding signs are located both sides of Hwy. Q at the north end of the marker mounds. Low-key but informative signs direct the visitor onto the site and guide them to the Visitor Center.

#### *Vehicle Access:*

The park entry remains at the current site, however, the park road is changed to wrap around the back of the Visitor Center and

continues on to the existing lower parking lot.

### *Pedestrian Access:*

A trail connects a number of interpretive nodes around the site. These nodes include educational signs, and perhaps seating. The pedestrian arrives at the visitor center across a paved plaza. From the main building a rustic covered boardwalk bridges the ravine and takes the visitor to a trailhead and event space. The event space includes a complete map of the site, archeological resources, and trails.

### *Impacts vs. Benefits*

The major benefit of this plan is that it has the lowest impact on the visual resources of the site. The disruption caused by the parking lot and building is significant, but the construction process would be hidden from view. The trail system enters the habitation area only along the river, however pedestrians may walk across the site much as they do now.

## III. MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE TWO

### *Plan Summary*

(For larger version of plan see the attached *Option Two Map*)

Good access and a central location are the hallmarks of Option Two. Hwy. Q is rerouted around the Visitor Center, which is located southwest of the existing entrance. The long organically shaped Visitor Center is placed parallel to the natural repose of the land. Visitors can experience

sweeping views of the site from inside the building and enjoy educational signs and displays on the plaza. Trails radiate out from the Visitor Center.



### ***Site Circulation***

#### ***Entry Sequence:***

Signs along Hwy B direct visitors to the site. To create a sense of arrival, way finding signs are added on both sides of Hwy Q at the north end of the maker mounds. Low-key but informative signs direct visitors onto the site and guide them to the Visitor Center.

#### ***Vehicle Access:***

The park entry is located along the newly routed Hwy. Q. Cars enter the parking lot on the west side of the building. Visitors either park and

enter the Visitor Center or continue on to the lower parking lot. A new service center is located at the south end of the site with a separate gated entrance.

#### ***Pedestrian Access:***

A trail connects a number of interpretive nodes around the site. These nodes include educational signs and, perhaps, seating. The pedestrian arrives at the Visitor Center across a paved and grassed plaza, which includes a sculpture of a Mississippian at a fish weir. The water and sculpture element combines with event space and the trailhead to make this a very exciting part of the site.

#### ***Impacts Vs. Benefits***

The major benefit of this plan is that it has the best views and ready access to many of the site's strongest features while being physically removed from sensitive areas. For an archeological site that has long suffered from a lack of visibility, this plan makes a step toward reversing that trend. While the building can be seen from throughout the site, this plan meets many education and access goals. Much of the Visitor Center is located on top of what is now Hwy Q, minimizing disruption to previously undisturbed land. Locating the road and building here requires a willing seller of private land and coordination, approval by the County Highway Department, and rerouting and reconstruction of the highway.

## **IV. MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE THREE**

### ***Plan Summary***

(For larger version of plan see the attached *Option Three Map*)

This option is all about partnerships, opportunities, and a heightened respect for the site. It connects ancient history, Native American history, and European settlement. The Visitor Center is physically woven into the layout of the current Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society grounds. The steps on the southwest mound are removed and access to the habitation portion of the site is limited to guided tours.



### ***Site Circulation***

#### ***Entry Sequence:***

Visitors enter one special historic district encompassing the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society and ancient Aztalan. Signs along highways Q and B inform visitors that they are entering a place rich in culture and history.

#### ***Vehicle Access:***

Parking for the Visitor Center is shared with the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society. Cars enter the parking lot from Hwy. Q between the north end of the marker mounds and the

caretaker's house. A recreated marker mound could be the focus of the main entrance. A second entrance for access to the lower parking and river access is located at the south end of the site.

#### ***Pedestrian Access:***

While all plans may include guided tours, this plan would do the most to encourage visitors to join the tours. Access to the main mounds and most of the habitation area would be during the guided tours only. During all other times visitors would be asked to remain on the interpretive trails.

### ***Impacts Vs. Benefits***

Views and connections to the popular marker mounds, the Princess mound, and the Historical Society make this plan an attractive tourism destination. The potential for partnerships and increased volunteerism could have many long-term benefits. The drawbacks of this plan may be increased congestion and the proximity to a private residence. Two entrances could make fee collection difficult.

## **V. MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE FOUR – No Action**

*Plan Summary* - The entire site would remain as is, undeveloped.

### ***Site Circulation***

*Entry Sequence*- The entry would remain where it is currently located.

*Vehicle Access* – Vehicles would proceed through the site as now with several current options for parking.

*Pedestrian Access* – Pedestrians would continue to have access as they do now for the range of recreational activities that currently take place.

*Impacts Vs. Benefits* – There could be several perceived benefits to a no action plan. There would be negligible additional maintenance costs over the next decade. The site would remain a lightly visited facility. The primary use of the site would continue to be for dog walking, picnicking, cross-country track practice and occasional track meets. Impacts would continue to have



deleterious effects on the site's archaeological resources, current vandalism would continue and the general public would remain basically unaware of the site, its history and global reputation.

## **VI. SELECTION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Much of Aztalan's charm is the effect it has on the imagination of users as they stand inside the habitation area or on the mounds. One can almost see the way these ancient people lived in this place. Protection of this unique perceptual quality was of very high priority. At the same time, overcoming the confusion and misunderstanding of the site among visitors to the site is paramount.

### **Description of the Preferred Alternative**

This selected management alternative strikes a balance between visitor access and protecting the valuable archeological artifacts. Importantly, it recommends the protection of scenic views into and out of the site through the purchase of development and scenic easements. The aesthetic intent is that all development blend into the landscape as unobtrusively as possible so that the magic of Aztalan remains while public knowledge of the site's amazing history increases.

This selected design preserve the views into and out of the center of the habitation area by placing the Visitor Center at the base of a large hill between Highway Q and the stockade wall. See the attached *Plan Summary (Preferred Alternative) Map*. This places the most disruptive part of the plan closest to the area that has already been disturbed and investigated. We know also that this area contains relatively fewer archaeological resources than other parts of the site. The plan contains other features that were popular on the preliminary options. These include trails with interpretive nodes for small group gatherings. Each node would identify a view and interpret a historical, archaeological or ecological topic of interest. A document called "*Aztalan Research: Preparing for Park Interpretation and Planning. 1999*" is rich in interpretive ideas and recommendations.

Site access to the east side of the river would be provided by a pedestrian bridge with fishing platforms. On this same side there would also be boardwalks, trails, interpretation of the effigy mounds and an overlook point for viewing the west side of the site. The trails on this side would need to be wide enough to accommodate a small service vehicle such as a ATV utility vehicle.

The existing pit toilets would be removed and replaced with an adjacent archaeological support facility combined with a maintenance building. A new picnic shelter with flush toilets would be constructed adjacent to the existing parking lot. The Archaeological Service Building /Maintenance Building would contain a small field lab, showers, a small kitchen and secure storage on one side. The other side would have overhead doors and a concrete slab floor for vehicle storage. A small parking lot of 10 spaces would serve both purposes.

The Visitor Center would be made of indigenous materials and designed to blend into the hill as much as possible to be visually unobtrusive. It would be of colors similar to the surrounding landscape. The front of the building would contain design elements tying it to the site visually and interpretively. Sample dwellings of simulated materials would be present (entered from inside the main building). A view from the entry plaza would make visual access to the site's stockade beyond possible. A simulated stockade wall at an appropriate height to the site's would

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visually tie to the site's restored stockade on the far side of the front façade. Parking would be to either side of the building with bus parking beyond the building in a separate lot.

The Visitor Center would contain, at a minimum, the following:

Offices	Gift Shop	Lobby
Exhibit Hall	Restrooms	Theater
Demonstration	Service Area	Discovery Lab
Dwellings	Classrooms	

The north side of the visitor center would contain specific elements as well. A plaza with a historic American Indian sculpture, a visual re-creation of the Crawfish river in the plaza pavement, a seat wall around the plaza with historic images of Aztalan site, a scale-map of the site inlaid into the plaza and an ADA-accessible connection to the paved portion of the main interpretive trail. These elements would provide a representative experience of the site for those visitors who, for reasons of age or disabilities, would not be able to visit the site beyond the building. Outside of the plaza would be an open space potentially screened with large vegetation from the road for ceremonies and reenactments as well as a council ring.

Landscaping around the building proper would be composed of massed and labeled native perennial forb and grass plants, with prairie plant communities just outside of the closest area. A shortgrass turf would be tried closer in to the building.

The southwest end of the site would have a boardwalk/bridge over the ravine to a small trail loop through a restored prairie. The bridge would have interpretation signage to explain a lowland native plant community restoration zone within the ravine. The trail would be open to hiking, cross-country skiing and adjacent snowshoeing. This area may also contain an onsite stormwater drainage/recharge area for the Visitor Center if it's roof runoff cannot be handled immediately adjacent to the building.

The project parking lots as with all roads would be paved but with no curb and gutter. They would sheet drain to small depressions for slow recharge back to the area's aquifers (recently being referred to as "rain gardens." The parking lot islands as well would be slightly depressed to hold part of this runoff as it was absorbed back into the soil. These islands would be planted with prairie grass and forb plugs. See the attached *Plan Summary (Preferred Alternative) Map*.

### **Selection Rationale**

The preferred alternative or Draft Master Plan is a compromise between the above competing visions and resulted in a combination of Option One and Option Two. The Visitor Center is hidden from views within the site by a large hill between the Stockades and Hwy. Q. It is placed in the general area of the existing parking lot in the southwest corner of the site, and does not require relocating Hwy. Q. Some archeological excavation has been done here, and it is known that this area has fewer archeological resources than other parts of the site. Importantly, the building is highly visible along Hwy. Q and is one of the first stops upon entering the site. The Visitor Center has "curb appeal" but will have very little visual impact on the interior of the site.

**Ability of Preferred Alternative to Meet:**

Vision and Goals

The goals for this property state that the master plan should "facilitate exploration of the site by visitors". The goals also require that the plan "show and promote respect of the site". These seemingly divergent goals are met by building the Visitor Center close location to Hwy. Q while limiting its visual impact and protecting archaeological and natural resources.

*Public Opinion*

Public opinion was torn between Option One and Option Two. Developing a Preferred Alternative that is a compromise between the two has increased support for the final Master Plan.

*Regional Analysis*

Aztalan State Park is often referred to as the "Cahokia of Wisconsin". It is considered the most important archeological site in the State. Diverse resources, a dramatic history, strong local support, and a central location demand that the site be protected and promoted. This master plan will enhance the State's ability to meet the needs and expectations of the local, national, and worldwide users, while protecting the valuable resources.

*Property Capabilities*

The entire planning process was based on mapping the property's resources and understanding the capability of the site to withstand the impacts of development and increased use. This master plan places development in the most suitable locations and increases protection of the most sensitive portions of the site.

## CHAPTER 5: SUPPORTING OR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### I. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The Department of Natural Resources developed a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to guide the public input portion of the master planning process. Opportunities for public involvement, development of mailing lists, media contacts, calling lists, stakeholder lists, and invitation procedures were included in the plan, as well as a timeline for implementation.

#### Public Participation Events

The public was encouraged to participate in the Aztalan State Park Master Plan Revision through numerous public meeting and workshops. Opportunities ranged from informal open houses at the Park to structured focus groups and even an inter-active design workshop and scrapbook session. The technical advisory team also met frequently to develop a vision, goals and impart technical assistance to the consultants. A listing of the events, date, and location appears below:

Technical Advisory Team Start-up	May 24, 2000	Aztalan Town Hall
Technical Advisory Team Meeting	June 29, 2000	Glacial Drumlin Trail Headquarters
Aztalan Days	July 2, 2000	Aztalan Museum
Public Involvement Kick-Off	July 22, 2000	Aztalan State Park
Technical Advisory Team Meeting	July 28, 2000	Lake Mills
Local Government, Preservation and Heritage Focus Group	August 25, 2000	Lake Mills Community Center
Public Input Meeting	August 30, 2000	Lake Mills Community Center
Meeting with Suzette LaMere HoChunk Cultural Resources Division Manager	September 6, 2000	Milwaukee
Technical Advisory Team Meeting	September 7, 2000	Glacial Drumlin Trail Headquarters
Great Lakes Intertribal Council	September 28, 200	Green Bay
Indian Education Round Table	September 30, 200	Green Bay
Technical Advisory Team Meeting	October 20, 2000	Glacial Drumlin Trail Headquarters
Public Design Workshop	November 2, 2000	Lake Mills Community Center
Technical Advisory Team Meeting	December 28, 2000	Glacial Drumlin Trail Headquarters
Public Open House – Plan Options	February 15, 2001	Lake Mills Community Center
Lake Mills/Aztalan Historical Society	March 15, 2001	Fargo Library, Lake Mills
HoChunk Historical Preservation and Cultural Resources Board	March 19, 2001	Black River Falls
Technical Advisory Team Meeting	March 23, 2001	Jennings & Assoc., Wauwatosa

### II. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### History of Aztalan

An isolated village with no associated outlying sites, Aztalan is located on the Crawfish River in south central Wisconsin. Aztalan is viewed as the northern most outpost of Mississippian society. It was occupied primarily between AD 1000 and 1300. Although the name "Aztalan" derives from Aztec legend, there is no Aztec relationship or link; the name postdates the



occupation and results from a historical misunderstanding on the part of a chronicler in 1836.

Site areas in the village include:

- (1) A 21-acre palisaded precinct within which most activity occurred. Watchtowers are located at regular intervals along palisade walls, which were made of heavy timbers and clay. Several less massive inner walls further separated site activities. Within this palisaded precinct is a midden concentration where garbage was dumped, a habitation and house area, a plaza area that functioned as a public or ceremonial open space, and a pyramidal mound area. The flat-topped mounds were constructed in stages, with a ceremonial building built on top of each stage.
- (2) A conical mound precinct located along a ridge at the western edge of the site. Each of about 50 conical mounds in this precinct had had a large post set in its center. These posts marked the site or particular events; the mounds were generally not for burial.
- (3) An agricultural area to the north and south of the palisade. Only household gardens were located in the palisade.

Both late Woodland and Middle Mississippian people occupied the site. The first settlers - Woodland people practicing maize horticulture - came up the Rock and Crawfish rivers from northern or central Illinois, or both, in AD 800-900. These people also settled elsewhere in southeastern Wisconsin. The more intensive Middle Mississippian presence represents the second movement of people from the south, which occurred 100 years or so later. It reflects perhaps the need to find land for an expanding population. For trade, the Crawfish River would have provided transportation to locations to the south, north, and west. Aztalan's location also would have allowed easy access to all regional vegetation and resource zones. For farmers, the land is level, and its soils are well-drained, easily cleared, and most suitable for maize agriculture.

On the basis of earlier reports, people invariably ask if the site's inhabitants were cannibals. Evidence for cannibalism includes some broken and split human bones in refuse pits. However, societies treat the bodies of their dead in different ways. Some parts may be curated for years, while other parts are discarded. Sometimes burial is immediate, and at other times it is not. Stages of treatment of the dead are well documented in Mississippian and Late Woodland societies. The cannibalism interpretation persists because no cemetery has been documented, few burials have been recovered, and the range of mortuary behavior is unknown. While it is possible that there was some ritual cannibalism at Aztalan, it is more likely that the mortuary ritual included extensive processing of the deceased, with subsequent burial of some bones and discard of others. As at other Mississippian sites, the fate of Aztalan's residents is unknown; there is no evidence that they were forcibly removed or evicted, but there is also no evidence that they moved elsewhere for purely internal reasons (Goldstein.)

Aztalan State Park is a Nationally Registered Landmark and on the Register of National Historic Places.

### **Historical Timeline<sup>15</sup>**

1000 - 1300	Major occupation of the site. Please see the above brief history.
1835	First European discovery of the site by Timothy Johnson.
1837	Hyer publishes first account of the site.

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<sup>15</sup> 15 Goldstein

1838	Site sold by government for twenty-two dollars.
1850	Increase A. Lapham maps entire site.
1919, 1920, 1932	First scientific excavations, conducted by Barret.
1948 -1962	The Wisconsin Archeological Survey does further excavations.
1952	Aztalan becomes a State Park
1964	The site of Aztalan granted National Landmark Status.
1964, 1967, 1968	State Historical Society Excavations - Freeman.
1984	University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Excavations - Goldstein
1980	The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources contracted the management of Aztalan State Park to the Town of Aztalan while retaining ownership.
2000	Management of Aztalan State Park returned to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
2001 to current	Michigan State University Excavations - Goldstein

### III. CULTURAL HISTORY AND RESOURCES

#### Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society

The Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society museum is located just north of Aztalan State Park. It is comprised of a reconstructed village including the original Aztalan Baptist Church built in 1852 and is a Registered Wisconsin Landmark. The Church holds a large collection of Native American and pioneer artifacts from the area. Three original area log cabins, the Aztalan schoolhouse, a grainary, a log admission house, and the 1861 Mamre Moravian Church have also been relocated to the museum grounds. The marker mounds along Hwy Q extend onto the Museum grounds. One, known as the Princess Mound, held the remains of Native American woman covered with strings of shells. The Historical Society is very active in the Lake Mills-Aztalan area. The museum is open for limited hours during the summer months.

### IV. LAND CAPABILITIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORIES

#### Soil Suitability

Twenty-one soil types occur in Aztalan State Park, ranging from sandy loams to muck, with silt loam being the predominant soil texture. This great variety has lead to a diverse vegetation pattern and habitat. Soils were analyzed for their suitability for recreation, roads, building foundations and septic tanks and diagramed in the *Soil Analysis Map*. Development of areas with severe soil limitations would be more expensive and detrimental to the environment than areas with slight or moderate limitation.



#### Topographic Analysis

The rounded, gentle topography of Southeastern Wisconsin is evident at Aztalan State park. Visitors enter the park at its high point along Hwy Q. To the east, the land slopes gently downward to the Crawfish River. A drainage swale bisects the southwest corner of the park, creating a more diverse topography and separation between the habitation area and a field to the south. The river bank on the west side of the Crawfish ranges from water level at the flood-prone canoe landing to steeper banks to the north that exhibit erosion. A

native vegetation restoration project is currently underway on the west riverbanks. The bank on the east side of the Crawfish rises to twenty feet above the river directly across from the canoe launch, creating an interesting overlook of the habitation area. The land on the east side of the Crawfish is very gently rolling and cut by two drainage swales that empty into the river.

### **Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat**

The major portion of Aztalan State Park is currently mowed turf to reduce the potential for bioturbation (digging by rodents and other wildlife and invasion by strong roots), that could damage artifacts under ground. The short turf reveals the structure of the reconstructed mounds. A diversity of plant and animal communities exists along the banks and on the east side of the Crawfish River. A list is given in the next section. The location and description of the following plant communities is also shown on the attached *Vegetation and Wildlife Map*.



#### Southern Mesic Forest

A deciduous forest dominated by the dense shade of sugar maple with a spring ephemeral ground layer and few shrubs, except along the riverbank where light intensities are higher. Other tree species include white oak, eastern hop hornbeam, poplar, cherry, basswood, and shagbark hickory. Mesic forests occur on rich soils with uniform moisture.

#### Southern Wet Forest

A deciduous forest found in wet soils, flood plains, and along drainage ways with fluctuating water levels. The dominant species include silver maple, black willow, American elm, green ash, and cottonwood. Box elder, buckthorn, and honeysuckle heavily invade the wet forests at Aztalan State Park.

#### Southern Sedge Meadow

An open plant community on wet soils just above the water table and dominated by sedges rather than grasses. The meadows also contain wetland grass species, cattails, and forbs such as asters and goldenrod. Dogwood and other shrubs often ring sedge meadows.

#### Shrub Carr

A tall shrub community in the intermediate stage between wet prairie and wet forest. The dominant shrubs are red osier dogwood, gray dogwood and a variety of willows. Other shrubs include raspberry, currant, elderberry, and nannyberry. The understory here is composed of cool season grasses such as brome, orchard, quack and canarygrass. Virginia creeper, poison ivy, wild cucumber and pioneering prairie forbs such as golden rods and asters are evident.

#### Aquatic

Plant communities in unimpeded rivers are generally limited to the immediate shoreline areas. The shores of the Crawfish River are infested by reed canarygrass. Historically, wild rice and aquatic emergent native plant species may have been present.

#### Old Field

The old agricultural fields on poorly drained soils are dominated by European grasses such as quackgrass and brome grass. These open fields are slowly becoming shrub communities as red-

osier dogwood, gray dogwood, box elder, buckthorn, and honey suckle become established. Pioneering prairie species, such as goldenrod are also becoming established

#### New Growth Woodland

The new growth woodland zone is a wooded area of even-aged trees with many invasive species in the under story. The predominant trees include shagbark hickory, cherry, red oak, and box elder with buckthorn and honeysuckle in the shrub layer. Old fence rows and field edges are also in this category.

#### River Bank Restoration Area

A bank stabilization and re-vegetation project area for erosion control and nesting habitat is taking place on the west banks. The steep, eroding banks of the Crawfish are stabilized with straw blankets and native prairie species are seeded. Invasive species such as buckthorn and honeysuckle are prevalent on the oldest sections of the restoration.

#### Mowed Turf

Much of the site is mowed turf. Most of the trees have been removed from this area, however, black locust, green ash, and white oak are present and have been planted along the park drive.

#### Wildlife

Wildlife at Aztalan State Park is typical of Jefferson County. Deer, fox, coyotes, and a variety of rodents frequent the park. The Crawfish River attracts waterfowl and provides a water source for many species. Common fish species include walleye, northern pike, white bass, black crappie, sauger, bullhead, and channel catfish.

### **Wetlands, Fish Habitat, and Aquatic Resources**

#### *Wetlands*

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wetland Inventory identifies wetlands that are two acres in size and larger. The inventory classifies wetlands according to aquatic and wetland plant communities, hydrology, human influence such as farming practices, and other wetland characteristics such as soil type. Development within wetlands may require permits from the WDNR and/or Army Corps of engineers and no buildings should be constructed within 75 feet of WDNR designated wetlands.

Designated wetlands and floodplain are identified on shown on the attached Wetlands, Fish Habitat, and Aquatic Resources plan.



#### *Floodplain*

The Floodplain delineation represents the inundation line of a 100-year flood as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Certain types of development are not allowed within the floodplain zone.

#### *Crawfish River*

Aztalan is located in the Lower Crawfish River watershed. A major tributary of the Rock River, the Crawfish has a rock and gravel bottom in this area, providing better fish habitat than other stretches of the river. In general, fish habitat has deteriorated due to non-point run-off and lack of erosion control. Most of the fish species are highly migratory, moving up the Crawfish River from Lake Koshkonong. Primary species include walleye, northern pike, white bass, black crappie, sauger, bullhead, and channel catfish. The Crawfish River is 49.5 miles long and is



considered a warm water sport fish community. The environmental problems and impacts on this river include heavy metal toxicity, carp disturbance, nonpoint source pollution, turbidity, sedimentation, dissolved oxygen, and habitat (scouring sedimentation, etc.)

### **Endangered Resources-Natural Heritage Inventory**

No endangered species have been identified within Aztalan State Park.

## **V. EXISTING SITE PROTECTIONS**

### State Statutes:

Ss. 44.47 - Historic Field Archeological Act - Requires state agencies to consult with Historical Society regarding excavations, development, etc. The contact agency is the Historical Preservation office in the State Historical Society, Office of the State Archeologist - 264-6495 <http://www.shsw.wisc.edu/arch/osa/index.html>

Ss. 157.70 - Burial Sites Act

National Register of Historic Places - The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This places it also under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended. The contact agency is the Department of the Interior - National Park Service. 202-208-3100. This agency is responsible for making sure the states are protecting the Historic Place.

## **VI. REGIONAL ANALYSIS**

### **Site Qualities**

Aztalan State Park contains significant archaeological resources associated with the Woodland and Mississippian cultures. It is the most important archaeological site in Wisconsin and known worldwide. Artifacts and earth forms, such as the platform mounds, indicate that it could have been the northern outpost of the great Mississippian culture whose capitol was Cahokia, near St. Louis. A connection can also be made with Dickson Mounds in central Illinois.

Aztalan's location on the Crawfish River and abundant natural resources may have lead to the settlement of this location. The open aspect of the site and easy access appeals to local and regional visitors. Park management estimates that 75% of current visitors live within 50 miles of the park. The educational, archaeological preservation, cultural, and recreational potential of this park draws a worldwide audience.

### **Geographic Location and Transportation**

Aztalan State Park is located in southeastern Wisconsin in the Town of Aztalan of northwestern Jefferson County, just south of the intersection of County Roads B and Q. The rural hamlet of Aztalan borders the Park on the north and northwest. The City of Lake Mills is less than one mile to the west. Interstate 94 travels east and west about 1 mile north of the Park. Many visitors to the site are expected to exit I-94 at Lake Mills or Johnson Creek and follow County Road B to the Park. I-94 connects the major population centers west of Aztalan, such as Madison, La Crosse and Eau Claire, Wisconsin and Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, with cities to the east including Milwaukee and the Chicago.



The Glacial Drumlin State Trail stretches along an abandoned railway line from Waukesha on the east to Cottage Grove on the west and will eventually connect with trails in Madison and the Military Ridge Trail to southwestern Wisconsin. The Trail provides for bicyclists, hikers, and snowmobiles. It passes just south of the park and intersects County Road Q, which provides access to the park. Existing signage provides direction between the two properties.

### **Geological and Ecological Significance**

Cambrian sandstone forms the bedrock of the Aztalan area and controls the movement and storage of ground water in Jefferson County. Ten to twelve thousand years ago the Green Bay Glacier of the continental ice sheet retreated from southeastern Wisconsin; leaving behind a cold, desolate landscape of rolling hills, glacial till, sand, gravel and boulders. The soils of the area around Aztalan evolved from particles that were deposited as the glacier melted. This geological feature is known as ground moraine (Borman, et al, 1976).

The effects of time and weather on this juxtaposition of landforms has created an ecologically diverse region known as the Eastern Ridges and Lowlands geographic province. This eco-region extends from northeastern to southern Wisconsin and extending as far west as Madison, roughly paralleling Lake Michigan. As the name suggests, rolling hills and drumlins alternate with low marshy areas. Physical movement is easy through this gently rolling area and it is the most densely populated part of the state (Lawrence, 1965).

West of the Crawfish River, which passes through the park, the warm, east-facing slopes may have supported savanna and prairie plant communities prior to European settlement. Decaying tall vegetation helped form the fertile soils of this area. Prairie fires set by lightning or Native Americans swept eastward on the prevailing westerly winds up to the Crawfish River. On the fire-free east bank, maple-basswood forests developed over time. Numerous lowlands and marshes are interspersed between the moraine and drumlin ridges. Decaying vegetation has formed peat and muck in these areas (Curtiss, 1959). Artesian springs are found along the edge of the Crawfish River at the base of the hills, providing yet another habitat. The variety of topography, plant communities and wildlife species in the vicinity of Aztalan State Park is immense and perhaps one of the reasons the Mississippians chose this location to build a village (Goldstein).

### **Population and Basis for Local Economy**

Aztalan State Park is located between the Village of Johnson Creek and the City of Lake Mills. Both municipalities have strong but different tourism attractions. The State Park has the potential to draw visitors who stop to visit the nearby outlet malls and visitors and summer residents on Rock Lake in Lake Mills. The Chambers of Commerce along the Rock River from Beloit to Horicon have joined forces to attract bus tours to area attractions that would likely stop at Aztalan. The development of a Visitor Center and more interpretive opportunities is expected to have a positive influence on the local tourism industry and associated businesses such as restaurants, hotels, and shops.

## **Population Trends**

The proximity of Madison, Waukesha and Milwaukee and easy access via I-94 contribute to steady population growth in the general vicinity of Aztalan State Park.

The *Jefferson County Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan* (Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, 1999) was used to provide a population analysis of the County, Cities, Villages, and Towns. The 2000 population of Jefferson County was 75,784. By 2020, mid-range population projects expect the County's population to reach 85,980, an increase of 13.45%. The population of the Town of Aztalan is expected to increase from 1447 to 1525 or 5.3%. The City of Lake Mills is expected to grow from a population of 4843 in 2000 to 5679 in 2020 or an increase of 17.26% (*Jefferson County Directory 2000-2001*).

Local residents visit Aztalan State Park for many recreational activities on a daily basis. Demand for these activities is expected to increase based on increasing population in Jefferson County and the City of Lake Mills.

## **Land Use**

Countywide 1996 land uses in Jefferson County are as follows: Agriculture and Woodlands-68.3%, Wetlands-14.8%, Urban Development 4.9%, and Open Water 4.5% (Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, 1999). The following land use classifications mapped in the *Jefferson County Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan* (Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, 1999) currently guide and impact future development at Aztalan State Park and the immediate vicinity. See attached Land Use and Transportation map. The *Jefferson County Zoning Ordinance No. 11*, effective March 20, 2000, and State and County shoreline zoning ordinances should be consulted prior to any new construction. The following land use classifications either affect potential construction activities at Aztalan or the character of the surrounding view shed.

### *Land Use Classifications*

#### **1. Agricultural Preservation Areas**

The agricultural preservation area surrounds Aztalan State Park on all sides except the north. The countywide goals adopted for this designation, which may influence Aztalan State Park, include preserving the rural character and aesthetic quality of Jefferson County, minimizing nonagricultural development on prime agricultural soils and maintaining the integrity of agricultural districts allowing for accepted agricultural practices. A few residential lots may be allowed adjacent to Aztalan State Park in the agricultural preservation areas, subject to re-zoning requirements.

#### **2. Environmental Corridor**

The environmental corridor designation includes land that meets one or more of the following conditions. See the attached *Land Use and Transportation Map*.

- Public-owned park, recreation, and conservancy lands, including Aztalan State Park
- Water bodies and wetlands mapped as part of the WDNR Wetland Inventory – such lands exist within the Park. See the attached *Wetlands, Fish Habitat & Aquatic Resources Map*.
- 100-year Floodplains based on Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). See the attached *Wetlands, Fish Habitat & Aquatic Resources Map*.

- Contiguous woodland over 10 acres in size. See the attached *Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Map*.
- Additionally, any land with a slope in excess of 20 percent should be considered as an environmental corridor.

### 3. Rural Hamlet

Rural hamlets are designated unincorporated areas of development in the rural area, traditionally consisting of a cluster of homes and perhaps a few businesses. The Jefferson County Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan lists the following goals for rural hamlets:

- Design and locate housing in rural areas in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts on agriculture and maintains the rural character in Jefferson County
- Provide sites in the rural parts of Jefferson County that are suitable for limited rural residential development
- Provide areas for limited growth and development for rural towns.

The rural hamlet of Aztalan is located immediately north of Aztalan State Park. It is possible that additional dense development of this area will occur to the west of the Park along County Road B

### 4. Urban Service Area

The City of Lake Mills 20-year urban service area boundary is located less than one mile west of Aztalan State Park. See the attached *Land Use and Transportation Map*. Goals for this designation encourage higher density residential development and nonagricultural-related businesses and industries to locate in areas where public utilities will be available. Higher density development just to the west of Aztalan State Park may eventually influence the ease of access to the Park and the views out the park.

### **Adjacent Public Lands**

In the Town of Aztalan, 1061 acres of land are used for transportation, utilities, communication, government institutional, and public recreation. This is .06% of the total 16,228 acres in the Township (Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, 1999).

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources manages extensive public lands and trails in the area around Aztalan State Park. The Glacial Drumlin Trail is a 47-mile trail on an abandoned railroad grade that runs from Waukesha in Waukesha County to Cottage Grove in Dane County. The trail passes about 1 mile south of Aztalan State Park. It is open to bicycles, roller blades, hikers, and joggers during the summer and to snowmobiles and skiers during the winter. Signage directing trail users to Aztalan State Park is recommended. The Glacial Drumlin Trail Office is located in a historic railway depot at 1213 South Main Street in Lake Mills.

Just southwest of the City of Lake Mills in the Town of Lake Mills, the Department of Natural Resources manages the Lake Mills Wildlife Area. The Wildlife Area encompasses nearly 1300 acres of wetlands, prairie, oak savanna and lakes-including Bean Lake, Mud Lake, and the backwaters of Rock Lake. Sandhill Station Campground is a primitive walk-in or bike-in campground within the Wildlife Area that is accessible from Mud Lake Road. The campground provides 15 rustic tent camping sites.

Korth County Park is located just west of Lake Mills on Korth Lane and overlooks Rock Lake. The new 89-acre park will feature hiking and cross-country skiing, picnicking, adaptive reuse of a dairy barn, and native plant community restoration. Rock Lake County Park on Hwy B in Lake Mills features a boat landing and picnic facility. The City of Lake Mills maintains boat landings, beaches and parks on Rock Lake.

Aztalan State Park provides archaeological and educational opportunities on the Mississippian and Woodland Cultures not found elsewhere in the immediate area or even in Wisconsin. Local residents are attracted to the wide-open views and large unprogrammed spaces of the park. Hiking trails and lake fishing are available in other local parks, but the cultural and historical character of Aztalan is unique.

### **Adjacent Private Lands**

In the Town of Aztalan, 14,810 acres or 91% are privately owned with the greatest percentage, 72%, in agriculture (Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, 1999).

Private lands surround Aztalan State Park. Land on the west and east is agricultural and provides a scenic buffer around the park. Land to the north is predominantly residential in the rural hamlet of Aztalan. The hamlet of Aztalan has the potential to expand on the west side of the park. The Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society is located immediately north of Aztalan State Park on Hwy Q. The Aztalan Museum is open from May 15 through September 30.

The management of Aztalan State Park should consider the effect of park activities on residential neighbors. Continued population growth and associated development would also change the character, aesthetics, and ecology of the land surrounding the park including the park experience for visitors.

### **Local Scenic Resources**

Participants at the public input meetings often mentioned the views of Aztalan State Park and the views out from the park as one of their favorite things. The gently rolling, agricultural landscape, interspersed with woods and wetlands, seems to be universally appealing. This management plan recommends the protection of the long views from the park and into the park through the use of scenic easements.

A high point, called Signal Hill by some, is located just west of the park. It is a landmark in the area and Indian mounds are located on the hill (Barrett, 1933), though the area is currently being farmed. Views of this hill from the park should remain unobstructed. A new water tower near this landform can now be seen from the park. The land east of the park is agricultural and farm buildings can be seen in the distance, placing the park in its agricultural context. Visitors coming to the park from the east experience a lush river valley and a first glimpse of the marker mounds as they cross the Crawfish River on Hwy B. Selective tree pruning could enhance this view.

### **Special Concerns, Threats and Opportunities**

Aztalan State Park is a special place, a Mississippian and Woodland cultural and historic site with worldwide significance and also a favorite local park. The balance between these two different, and sometimes competing, uses brings up several issues of special concern.

### *Promotion*

Promotion of the site and education of the tourism industry to its existence is lacking at this time. The feasibility of building an informative and sensitive Visitor Center and Archaeological Service Center will hinge on increased visitation and entrance fee collection to offset at least part of the construction and staffing cost. This Master Plan recommends a commitment to and emphasis on promotion of the site.

### *Local Use and Neighborhood Concerns*

A related concern is the reaction of local users and neighbors to changes at the park. A change in the focus from primarily a recreational facility to an educational and archaeological site with an emphasis on respect of the history and culture of the Mississippians will bring changes to the allowed activities and an increase in traffic and visitors to the site. Changes should be initiated gradually with an emphasis on communication with local residents and neighbors before changes are implemented. The Lake Mills-Aztalan Museum and adjacent homes have special concerns about potential trespassing and vandalism from increased visitation. Neighbors need to be alerted to changes in traffic volume, traffic patterns and allowable activities.

### *Access to the Property on the East Side of the Crawfish River*

To date, access to the east side of the Crawfish River has not been encouraged. Native American mounds of the Woodland Culture are found here and park management is concerned about the potential for mound vandalism in this remote area. Beautiful maple woods and high overlooks of the habitation area make these east side trails desirable. A pedestrian bridge to this area is shown in the Master Plan. The bridge would also provide additional fishing platforms. The bridge and trails should be wide enough to accommodate park maintenance and patrolling vehicles the size of a 4-wheeler. Access to the bridge will be only from within the park so those visitors to the eastern portion can be more easily monitored.

### *Entrance Fees*

No entrance fee has been collected at Aztalan State Park to date. Participants at the public input meetings indicated that institution of an entrance fee or annual park sticker requirement in conjunction with site improvements and, in particular, a Visitor Center would be acceptable. The Master Plan provides for only one entrance to the Park to facilitate fee collection.

### *Friends of Aztalan*

The Friends of Aztalan is a non-profit support group for Aztalan State Park. Members offer guided tours of the park and raise funds for special projects. The Friends expect an expanded role with the development of a Visitor Center including fund raising, volunteer opportunities in the center and office space.

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